DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 019 CE 083 183

AUTHOR	Hansen, Leif
TITLE	Semi-Skilled, Mature Men in Adult Education: Motivation and Barriers. A Research Project Summary.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	11p.; In: Adult Education and the Labour Market IV: Papers from the Seminar of the ESREA (European Society for Research into the Education of Adults) Research Network (4th, Dubrovnik, Croatia, May 1998).
AVAILABLE FROM	Roskilde University Press, Postbox 260, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark (Papers not sold individually, for complete volume: ISBN-87-7349-428-3, ISSN-1395-6833, $15). E-mail: kac@ruc.dk.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Adult Learning; Adult Students; Continuing Education; Educational Attainment; Educational Attitudes; Educational Strategies; Foreign Countries; Interviews; *Learning Motivation; *Lifelong Learning; *Males; *Middle Aged Adults; *Semiskilled Workers; Skill Development; Student Motivation; Student Needs; Surveys; Training; Unions; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Denmark

ABSTRACT

Researchers examined the learning motivation of middle-aged, semiskilled, male Danish workers and barriers preventing them from participating in training. Data were collected through a literature review, a survey of 2,400 individuals from 3 unions, interviews with 11 of the respondents, and visits to adult education institutions. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents had left school after grade 9. Of every 10 respondents, 3 were interested in adult education and had already participated, 3 were interested but had not yet participated, and 4 had no interest in participating. The respondents' preferred forms of training mentioned were labor market training courses, company-arranged inservice training, and union-run programs. The cited barriers to participation included being too old, working at a company with no educational policy, and being too busy. Respondents stated that they would be more likely to participate in training if courses were more directly relevant for their jobs, participating in training did not mean losing money, and courses would lead to higher salaries. Education providers were advised to take the following actions: respect the immediate victims of global postindustrialism; let learning processes be based on social experiments in companies; and have educational institutions go to the people, rather than forcing people to come to them. (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made

ED 465 019

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Hansen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Leif Hansen

SEMI-SKILLED, MATURE MEN IN ADULT EDUCATION - MOTIVATION AND BARRIERS. A RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

Introduction

Denmark faces structural problems similar to other Western, industrial societies: economy is changing rapidly, globalization and post-industrialism are visible factors on the labour market, and in culture and every day life. Approximately one third of the workforce possess skills and competencies that might have been adequate in the era of fordistic industrialism, but which are now gradually becoming outdated (statistics show that ten years ago 3 out 10 unskilled workers faced long term unemployment; it has now risen to 4 out of 10); around one million workers left school early, having only seven to nine years of general education behind them; more than two thirds of these have no vocational education at all (yet half of these might have attended a few weeks of practical labour market training courses).

For several years it has been an integrated part of the dominating political philosophy to solve these structural problems by the means of adult and continuing education. Reforms have been negotiated with the social partners and laws have been passed in parliament, expressing the rather wide spread consensus in Denmark about the value of implementing the more or less global ideas of 'life long learning'.

But the head ache for politicians and civil servants was/is that it seems as if - to put it shortly - those adults with the biggest objective need of more education are the ones that show the biggest subjective resistance against participation in adult and continuing education. You might say that the oral and practical supporters of life long learning represent a movement - but it is apparently not a popular movement.

Related to some analytical work that civil servants from the Danish Ministry of Education had to do in preparing a reform of the adult and continuing education system, discussions came up about this complex or syndrome: as long as those with

good educational backgrounds are the ones that participate the most in adult and continuing education, how can we qualify the majority of the workforce, strengthen competitiveness of our economy and combat social exclusion etc.? There was a need of having a deeper look into the motivations and barriers - or should we say symbolic meanings of education? - among those groups which, according to statistics of participation, showed only little interest in adult education.

This lead to an agreement between Roskilde University, Adult Education Research Group and the Danish Ministry of Education about a survey, focusing on a group, which does not participate very much in adult education, and for which researchers have not shown much interest: semi-skilled, male workers between 40 and 60 years of age.

Method and theory

We were asked by the ministry to, partly, carry out a survey, and, partly, to propose changes on all levels of supply, according to the findings in this survey and based on a generalisation of examples of 'good practise' in already existing programmes for this target group.

First of all, we examined national and, to some extent, international literature about motivation and barriers related to participation in adult and continuing education. Included in this examination were concrete empirical surveys and evaluations, for instance of the experiences with activities performed due to the Danish Paid Educational Leave Act (VUS). We did this partly to identify relevant problems and questions for our own research process, partly to obtain a bigger volume of data, for instance statistics about men of this age participating in VUS.

Secondly, we made a questionnaire survey, based on 2.400 respondents, chosen among unions, which primarily organise unskilled and semi-skilled men. Practically all respondents were men between 40 and 60, i.e. born between 1936 and 1956. The three unions are: SiD (general workers union - industry-, transport-, construction- and agricultural workers), HK (white collar - trade and stock workers) and Danske Vognmænd (independent haulage contractors).

Thirdly, we interviewed 11 respondents among those who filled in and returned the questionnaire, stating that they were willing to be interviewed. The interviews were carried out in the respondents' homes or workplaces; they were semistructured

interviews, more or less a dialogue based on the themes and answers in the questionnaire.

For the questionnaire as well as for the interviews the themes were:

- the respondents' educational background, compulsory school and vocational education, relationship with teachers, success and failure with different subjects etc.

- the symbolic representation of education in the socio-cultural context of the respondent as a child and now: what were the parents' view of school and education, their own educational background, interest and involvement in the respondents school matters etc. Also, the actual spouses relationship with education was asked to and discussed.

- the present relationship of the respondent to work and labour market issues: what characterises the actual work place of the respondent; how often has he changed his job; has he been unemployed; what is his ideal of a good work place, i.e. what values does he fancy in the job?

- finally, we asked directly about the respondents' view on education: would he like to participate, has he already participated; in that case: in what, and why? What barriers has he faced, and what would he like to see of changes in the supply of the educational institutions, if he was to participate (more)?

Fourthly, we visited adult education institutions, which have run programmes for this target group with at least some success, in order to identify and describe elements of concepts and activities that could be generalised as ways of 'good practise' - and thus function as recommendations for future reforms and changes on different levels of policies and supply of adult and continuing education. To do this we observed the learning environment and interviewed participants, teachers and directors here.

To have a background of notions and pre-understandings to relate to in our interpretation of our data we made explicit our understanding of the major societal changes that by the end of the day have put our issue on the agenda: what is it, basically, that makes it interesting, relevant, necessary etc. to change the understanding of education from something that *was* a *possibility* for a *few* members of society in *specific parts* of their lives into something that *is* a *necessity* to *all* members of society *all through* their life course?

The understanding of this basic question is a precondition for understanding *our* basic theoretical question: how does our target group fit in, react to, resist against etc. this historical development - and why?

To reflect this we found/find it relevant to try to formulate understandings of:

- civilisation: from traditionalism into modernity?
- economy and production: from industrialism to post-industrialism?
- culture: from collective working class culture into individual self-realization?
- gender identity: from masculinity into androgyneity?

Unfortunately, like here we reached only the level of stipulations in these analyses. The really interesting challenge is, of course, not to reproduce all the different attempts in modern social science to grasp this complexity (Habermas, Giddens, Beck, Ziehe, Bloch, Birmingham, Zoll etc.), but to be able to understand our specific target group and its complex relation to lifelong learning in the light of these and other theories (for instance theories of masculinity).

For what purpose? In order to avoid the actual danger that education turns from a mean of enlightenment, liberation and democratization into an instrument in the hand of the system to polarize, divide and oppress cultures and life styles in the name of neo-liberalistic pragmatism: efficiency, competitiveness, consumerism and economic growth. And furthermore: to see if it is possible to identify cultural-symbolic elements (meanings, understandings, presuppositions, values etc.) in the concrete formulations of the target group itself that can function as starting points for self-regulated educational processes.

Some findings

First some important findings from the questionnaire survey, focusing on the members of SiD (general workers union).

About school: half of the SiD-respondents left school after 7th grade, and after 9th grade almost 3 out of 4 had left. For the respondents parents, 9 out of 10 left school after 7th grade (in those days seven years were compulsory; it is now nine years). How were the parents attitude towards their children's (the respondents) school?

Less than half of the SiDs tick "Yes, my parents wanted me to have an education"; only 1 out of 4 says that their parents attended school meetings and other activities related to school. 1 out of 5 says that the parents deliberately wanted him to leave school as soon as possible. In their comments several of them notes that their parents were rather passive towards school, and that it was an important value for both parents and the respondents themselves to finish school and get a job; it was important to become independent, to earn money - and besides, there was little money in the family for further schooling.

It is remarkable that only app. half of the SiDs say that they were OK with the subject Danish (reading and writing) in school; only 2 out of 3 felt OK with mathematics and with their relationship with the teachers. Many of the SiDs take the opportunity of commenting their school experience; some typical comments are: "The teachers were in favour of the more well off kids"; "The teachers would beat us up and tear apart our self-esteem from the very first day"; "My school time was a hell and my thoughts about school are few and small".

3 out of 10 SiDs have no vocational education at all; other 3 out of 10 have short term vocational labour market training courses; 33% have a vocational education, and 5% have some further education. For the parents it goes that 9 out of 10 had no education what so ever.

About work: most of the respondents have a stable connection with their workplace: almost 3 out of 4 have had only one work place within the last five years. Also, we asked them, what characterized their workplace. The social aspect gets the highest score: 9 out of 10 stress that they have good colleagues, 8 out of 10 that they can have a private conservation with their colleagues during working hours. They have some independency in their job: 8 out of 10 say that they have to/are allowed to organise their work themselves.

What is maybe remarkable is that less than half of the respondents tick that their work place offer them a possibility of in-service training or other forms of continuing education.

We asked the respondents to prioritize three statements that they would value if they could freely choose their job; the highest score is about the social relations: "That the management should respect and understand the employees"; secondly, that there should be "a good working environment"; thirdly, "a good comradeship", and fourthly: "Security in the job". The possibility of access to training and education gets the second lowest score!

About education: 3 out of 10 of the SiDs say that they are interested in adult education, and they have already participated; other 3 out of 10 say that they are interested, but they have not yet participated; 4 out of 10 say that they are not interested (this is no doubt a minimum; we carried through a supplementary survey among those who did not answer our questionnaire in the first place; these telephone interviews revealed that 62% were not interested!).

We asked those who were interested about their motivation; the scores were: 1) "To prove for myself that I am capable". 2) "To meet new people", and 3) "Because I have good experiences from participation in courses". Interesting enough is that the statement: "Because my job demands new qualifications" scores quite little.

Furthermore, we asked what kind of adult education the respondents would prefer to attend; the scores are: 1) "Labour market training courses", 2) "in-service training, arranged by the company" and 3) "programmes run by the union".

Also, we asked what made it difficult for the respondents to participate in adult education. For the SiDs the findings were that they 1) found that they were too old to participate, 2) that there was no educational policy in the companies, and 3) that they were generally too busy, both in their job and in their leisure time.

Finally, we asked what changes in the educational system would make them (more) interested in participation. The highest score was: 1) That the courses would be more directly relevant for the job, 2) that they would not lose money from participation, and 3) that the courses would lead to higher salaries.

The cross tabulations showed among other things that:

- interest in participation decreases with age,
- the higher school education, the more interest in participation,
- the more positive, parents - and the respondents themselves - were in the respondents school, the more interest in participation as adults,
- the better possibilities the workplace offers for adult education and development in work, the more interest in participation
- for the SiDs: those with relatively good wages are less interested than those with relatively low wages

- the more satisfied the respondents are with their present job, the less interested are they in participation, and
- those, whose values about their work situation are related to good comradeship, good working environment, high wages and job security, are less interested than those, whose values are about a personal and qualification developing job.

The findings in the interviews are along the same lines. What does all this mean?

Outline of an analysis

It seems as if the transition of our society, economy and culture goes too fast for the traditional industrial working man. He seems to be "ungleichzeitig" (Bloch). Among our respondents in this research project there is apparently taken no attitudinal consequences of this transition: many of them do not seem to realize the social danger they face: that globalization and post-industrialism rapidly removes the firm ground they used to stand on. Many of them are not interested in education because they already have the values they look for in life: good earnings, comradeship, job security etc. If they are interested in education, it is more as this being a pleasant change from daily routines - or it is about a day by day investment in maintaining the good, unskilled industrial job, they have already. There is no consciousness about the need for a long term investment in education that would lead to a safe position in the post-industrial information society.

This goes along with a profound socio-cultural heritage from generations: there is no tradition of education in the family; they have been doing well during the prosperous post war period, earned good money in stable jobs - and by solidarity and collective values stabilised the welfare society, which is - seen from this point of view - the optimal consolidation of future security. Education is a foreign territory - hard work and respect are familiar bull fighting areas. Education can change your life; for modern middle class people this is a chance - for the industrial working man it is a risk. For generations he has had risks enough - why should he seek it purposely? And if education seems to be inevitable, its symbolic impact should be minimized as much as possible: specific job training courses or programmes run by the union; here he feels safe.

In this instrumental, rather short term view he is supported by his employer: not many of them perform strategical management, analysis of future qualification demands and educational planning in accordance with this. They are all: workers,

managers and owners gathered in the same comfortable, well facilitated and heated tent on an ice floe; only problem is that this ice floe is gradually drifting southwards, apparently without anybody noticing it!

What to do? A conclusion

1. Respect the immediate victims of global post-industrialism: their history, values and hopes for the future.

2. Share the problems of necessary changes in society with people themselves: industrial workers, owners and managers of small and medium sized companies, other traditionalists. Do not expect the concept of life long learning to be successful if in reality it represents a double up of reification.

3. Let learning processes in this context be based on social experiments in the companies; learning will derive from changes in power relations, work organisation and future planning; don't force change - let it grow. Involve people and thus make them responsible for their own choices.

4. Force the educational institutions to come to people - not the other way around. They should be supporters and facilitators of change - not teachers and priests. Activate democratic potentials in the trade unions; they are symbols of the collective culture of solidarity - and should be guardians of educational and industrial democracy.

5. Remember, this is not what John Lennon said: "All you need is more money"!

The research project is reported in:

Lillian Christiansen, Søren Dupont, Tricia Gale & Leif Hansen: "Travle, halvgamle mænd i uddannelsessamfundet". En undersøgelse af nogle 40-60-årige mænds motivation og barrierer i forhold til deltagelse i voksenuddannelse. Roskilde Universitetscenter og Undervisningsministeriet, 1997.

Kirsten Weber

THE HUNT FOR MASCULINE COMPETENCE FOR CARE QUALIFICATION BETWEEN LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION AND FEMININIZATION ?

The Evaluation

My presentation sets out in a small project: an educational evaluation undertaken for a Danish County, assessing aim and methods in a labour market integration project, aiming at recruiting male labour for certain jobs in the health sector. Such politically oriented educational evaluations either fall outside the scope of research interest (cf. Haug 1991) or - if they are yielded theoretical interest - represent exemplary societal and educational problems, that should indeed not be dealt with, without drawing on the insigths of educational research.

In the Adult Education Research Group at Roskilde University we have developed af critical discourse on educational evaluation (e.g. Weber 1993, Andersen 1998). For an educational evaluation to deserve the label "research based" firstly the evaluation must reflect a substantial theoretical analysis of the field in question - in this case an understanding of present modernization and the development of qualification in the health sector. Secondly the evaluation must demonstrate that learning, teaching and education are conceptualized, and thirdly the method and methodology must be explicit. Finally the societal framework and the political implications of the evaluation must be clear. The latter question demands analysis of the historical and political clashes of interest, inherent in education - in this case the potentially conflicting interest of the participants, the workplace, the educational institutions and the labour market authorities, as well as the more general level: what are the interests of patients in particular, and civil society in general ?

The approach does not point to any one of the models traditionally accepted ("polarized", "goal-oriented", etc., etc.), but points to a variety of methods. We think of ourselves af more theoretically ambitious than the otherwise very functional "fourth generation" (Guba & Lincoln 1989) and more interdisciplinary than